



Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

March 2009

P.O. BOX 82, ORINDA, CA 94563

(925) 254-1353

Museum Location

Lower Level of
Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way

Museum Hours of

Operation

Monday,
Wednesday, &
Friday 3-5 p.m.
Also by Appointment
Call 925 254-1353

Web Site

www.orindahistory.org

Newsletter

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teresa@orindausa.com

Wallace Realtors, a Family Business



Clark Wallace holding a 1941 photograph of his relatives outside Wallace Realtors in Orinda

Clark Wallace has an amazing memory, especially for details regarding real estate in Orinda. As the featured speaker at the OHS general meeting earlier this month, he shared many recollections about being a realtor and developer in this area. Clark is a third generation realtor whose family has been involved in real estate in Lamorinda since 1938.

It all started in 1912 when William Stowell Wallace (Clark's grandfather) who had been a school principal in Salt Lake City, decided to go into real estate. He eventually moved out to California and set up an office on Grand Ave. in Oakland. His son Ed (Clark's dad) joined the busi-

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Upcoming Events

- **April Board Meeting**
Wednesday, April 15th, 3 to 5 pm at the OHS Museum
- **May Board Meeting**
Wednesday, May 13th, 3 to 5 pm at the OHS Museum
- **May Annual Meeting**
Wednesday, May 20th, 7 to 9 pm at the Orinda Community Church—**all are invited to join OHS for a fun filled evening—Speaker to be announced**
- **BBQ—The May 30th event has been cancelled**

Moraga Adobe

The next meeting of the **Friends of the Moraga Adobe** is Monday April 13th. Contact Bobbie Landers at 254-8260 or visit www.moragaadobe.org for more info.

Sleepy Hollow's Rural Beginnings Memories of Building a House in the 1950s

Dorothee Paterson has been an Orinda resident for over fifty years. She and her husband, Bob, bought a lot on Van Ripper Lane in 1950. "We moved out into the country," said Dorothee. The Sleepy Hollow area of Orinda was different back then; it was much more rural, where field mice could be found munching on the thistle plants in the open landscape. The Paterson home was one of the first houses built on the upper section of Van Ripper Lane. Dorothee and Bob built the house themselves. Dorothee recently shared her memories with the Historical Society about what brought them to Orinda in the 1950s, building their home, and what it was like living in Orinda back then.

Dorothee grew up in Southern California but moved up to the East Bay where she earned a chemistry degree at UC Berkeley. Bob was from Portland, Oregon and came to California to get his engineering degree at Stanford. They met after college when they both took jobs at Chevron in Richmond. After getting married they lived in Albany. Bob liked the fog and cold weather, but Dorothee with her Southern California roots preferred it dry and warmer. They considered moving to Marin, but the San Rafael/Richmond Bridge had not been built yet (it opened in 1956). So the weather in Orinda seemed the perfect choice—dry enough for Dorothee, but some fog and cold for Bob. They decided to try county life out in the "wilds" of Orinda.

They bought their lot in Sleepy Hollow for \$2500. The Long Estate had been built, but there wasn't much else around. The land in the area had been subdivided, but most lots had not been built on yet. When the Patersons moved out to Orinda they lost a lot of their friends who didn't want to venture through the dimly-lit tunnel out to the boonies of Contra Costa County. All the building supplies were trucked in from Oakland and

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Thank You

Recent donations to OHS

- Commemorative T-shirts were donated by **Amy Worth**.
- Sepia photo of Orinda's "Lost Valley" substation donated by **Sarah Siegel**.
- **Carl Walker** gave Argonut newspapers (1921 to 1924.)
- **Vasco Giannini** donated a gift bag.
- Two Orinda Arts Council scrapbooks were donated by **Sue Farmer**.
- A 1960s era *The Shopping News* was contributed by **Ann Batmale**.
- Various yearbooks from Acalanes, Miramonte and Pine Grove were donated by **Kent Long**.
- **Clark Wallace** donated many artifacts from Wallace Realtors including historic crossroads photos.
- **Lynn Trowbridge** donated booklets and artifacts from the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church.

Thank you to Rose Bolin, the owner of Treible's in Orinda, for generously providing the printing of this newsletter.

Funding Donations for OHS

The Orinda Historical Society is very appreciative of the following cash donations it has received: An **Orinda City Community Promotions Grant**, an **Anonymous Donation** sent through the **Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation**, and from the following individuals: **Vanessa Crews, Peter de-Laveaga, Nan Gefen, Joan Montgomery, Kay & Bill Norman, Leon Poupenny, Frank & Marilyn Watson, Shirley White, and Sam Zorich**. This type of support is crucial, and provides for the purchase of much needed supplies for the historical society. Thanks to all the above donors for their generous contributions.



Historical Fun in Martinez

Attend the **Conference of California Historical Societies 2009 annual meeting** in Martinez on **June 25 to 28** for fun adventures and informative workshops. Excursions include:

- **Special tour of Port Chicago**
- **A day at Rosie the Riveter WWII National Historic park**
- **Lunch on the Red Oak Victory ship**
- **Visit to Eugene O'Neill's Tao house**
- **Saturday evening at the Martinez Cabaret**

The conference is being hosted by the Martinez Historical Society and the National Park Service; for more information, or to request a detailed program, contact **Andrea Blachman** at **925 372-7146** or email her at **andreablachman@pacbell.net**



Earth Day/Wildlife Festival in Orinda

Visit the historical Wagner Ranch Nature Area for the 8th annual Earth Day/Wildlife Festival.

This event is **Sunday, April 19th from 1 to 4 pm**. The nature Area is located adjacent to Wagner Elementary school at **350 Camino Pablo in Orinda**. Refreshments will be provided. Bring the kids or grandkids for lots of fun activities including: animal puppet shows, paper making and printing, the ABC's of recycling, just to name a few things.



Wallace Realtors *(continued from Page 1)*

OHS Board Members 2009

- President:** Lucy Hupp Williams
(650) 349-3382
- Vice President:** Erik Andersen
(925) 254-8444
- Treasurer:** Betty Karplus
(925) 254-4970
- Recording Secretary:**
Carl Weber
(925) 254-8473
- Archivist:** Kent Long
(925) 258-9771
- Assistant Archivist/Database:**
Dan Holmes
(925) 254-3360
- Membership:** Randy Lamont
(925)-631-0525
- At-Large:** Charles Blue
(925) 254-2324
- At-Large:** Susan Ross
(925) 254-3720
- At-Large:** Pat Draa
(925) 376-6657
- Displays:** Open
- Newsletter:** Teresa Long
(925) 258-9771
- School Liaison:** Kay Norman
(925) 254-9536
- Videographer:** Jerry Vurek
(925) 253-7995



1941 Photo (r to l) Clark's grandfather William Stowell Wallace, Uncle Lawrence Wallace, grandmother Clair Wallace, and father William Edwin Wallace

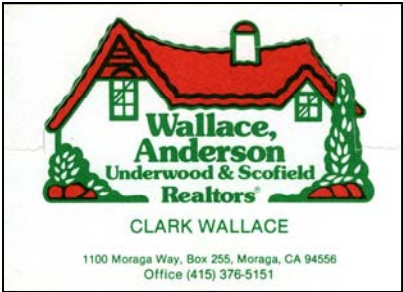
ness as a realtor in 1924. When the new Caldecott tunnel opened in 1937, the Wallaces decided Orinda had potential and opened an office there. The red roofed Wallace Realtors "cottage" opened in December 1938 at the crossroads and was a fixture in Orinda for 29 years. It was truly a family business. At the OHS meeting Clark showed business cards for his mom, dad, and himself that all had the familiar little red house logo. "If you bought a home back then, it was likely from my dad," explained Clark.

Clark (who was born in 1933) grew up in Piedmont with his siblings; his mother insisting the kids be done with school before moving the family to Orinda. However, Clark remembers spending lots of time in Orinda playing in the creek and climbing though culverts. His family joined the Orinda Park Pool in 1938 when it still had an island in the middle with a tree. "It was like Hawaii," said Clark. There were very few private pools in Orinda at this time.

The Casa Orinda opened two doors down from the Wallace Realtors before it moved to its current location after 1940. There were other reality offices in Orinda including Fred T. Wood, Elaine Massey & Underwood, Jamison, and Mitchell & Austin. The thirties and forties were a tough time for real estate. Clark recalled the real growth in Orinda started in the postwar era, with lots of Glorietta subdivisions and Martha road development back then. After attending UC Berkeley and serving in the Navy for 3 years, Clark became a realtor in 1958 and joined the family business.

Wallace Realtors also played a large role in the development of Moraga. In 1915 a large parcel of land known as the Moraga Ranch was owned by the Moraga Land Corp. The property started at the Orinda Crossroads and extended to where Moraga is now. A big chunk was sold to the Rheem family circa 1940s. In 1953, Clark's dad Ed brokered the deal to sell 5,000 acres (which included Hall Drive, all of Moraga, and Burton Valley) to Utah Construction for 4 million dollars. Utah developed a master plan, but decided that it was a hard way to make a profit. So in the 1960's, Utah sold the land again using Wallace Realtors to Russ Bruzzone. "It was quite a risk for Bruzzone to take," said Clark. Clark subsequently worked with Bruzzone on the development of Moraga. When the red-roofed Wallace Realtors office in Orinda was closed in 1967 (condemned by BART), the new office was opened in Moraga.

As a developer, Clark Wallace was involved with many Orinda projects such as the Pine Grove development and the Orinda Theater Square complex. Some projects like the theater became quite contentious. "Orinda is a great place to live, but not to develop," declares Clark. Along with his many contributions as a businessman, Clark was President of the Orinda Association and Chamber of Commerce (1968), and served two terms on the OUSD Board (1969 to 1977.)



Clark Wallace Business card



Sleepy Hollow's Rural Beginnings *(continued from page 1)*



**The Paterson House under construction circa 1950
photo courtesy of Dorothee Paterson**

Berkeley. With his engineering degree, Bob was confident that he could design and build the house without professional help. There were a few things they contracted out, like the grading of the driveway, but it was mostly the two of them working on the house every weekend. Dorothee was pregnant with her first child when they started building the house. By the time the house was ready to move into, two years later in 1952, they already had two small children. Dorothee remembers being up shingling the roof while pregnant, "I wouldn't do that again," she says. After their first child was born, they would bring a playpen out and continue to work on the house. There didn't seem to be much that Bob couldn't do, from major framing of the house, to finish work like building the kitchen cabinets. He also installed all the plumbing. Building inspectors would come from Martinez to approve the work, but Dorothee found that once they realized that the Patersons were

committed to doing a quality job and not cut corners, they were very agreeable folks to work with. While building the house, they met a few people walking by. There was a cattle ranch behind the property, so aside from the occasional wandering steer, it was peaceful and quiet.

The Paterson house was a 1950 era home that today still has beautiful open beam ceilings and wood paneling. A local contractor, Charlie Philips, built some of the homes across the street. He built his houses with the same floor plan and very close to the street to save money, and make the utility hookup easy. He couldn't understand why the Patersons had built their house so far back from the street. Dorothee is very happy that they did so she still has a view and some privacy.

Orinda was a sleepy little town in the fifties; if you wanted any cultural events you'd go into SF to see a show. Walnut Creek was a one street town. There was minimal shopping, but a good farmers market and a seafood place in Lafayette helped a lot. The bright spot was Phairs in Orinda especially if you wanted something special or exotic. Phair's had a very good bakery (yummy Blums cakes) and a good butcher shop. Luckily, Sleepy Hollow school opened just in time for their first child to start kindergarten.

Although her husband Bob has since passed away, Dorothee still lives in the house the two of them built and where they raised their five children. She still enjoys the marvelous view of the Orinda hills out her living room window.



Paterson Home March 2009— The house is now hidden from the street by vegetation